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Christian duties in
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New York City

[1917]

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FILM SIZE: 35 mm

REDUCTION RATIO: 10:1

IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 2-4-97

INITIALS: FB

TRACKING # :

MSH 21356

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC IRREGULARITIES

MAIN ENTRY: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

Christian duties in conserving spiritual, moral, and
social forces of the nation in time of war

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Christian Duties
in Conserving Spiritual, Moral and
Social Forces of the Nation
in Times of War



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In this time of crisis our country is called to conserve all its resources and energies in order that it may devote them to the highest interests of all humanity. The nation has come to recognize that there are many forms of national service. The daily round and common task are exalted to a new value because of their meaning for the whole of suffering humanity. Under the stimulus of a patriotism that is more than national, multitudes of people are finding in the ordinary processes of life those spiritual values which it has long been the peculiar province and duty of the Christian church to unfold. In such an atmosphere the churches will find themselves able with increasing power to make clear the meaning of the great truth that neither the nation nor humanity can live by bread alone, that only as they seek for the kingdom of God and its righteousness will "all these things"

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be added to them. It is with a renewed sense of the religious meaning of all the activities and relationships of life, with a deepened conviction that the entire life of humanity in its every aspect must be organized around the principles of Jesus, that the Federal Council now calls the churches to consider their practical duties in this emergency.

Liquor Traffic

Foremost among the forces which are wasting the moral, economic, and social resources of the nation stands the liquor traffic. It is wastefully absorbing food supplies and toil and life at a time when these are sorely needed to preserve the nation. Trained economists declare that last year the manufacture of liquor consumed 7,000,000,000 pounds of foodstuffs for the production of malt and distilled liquors—enough food to supply the energy requirements of 7,000,000 men for a year. It is inconceivable that the liquor traffic should be permitted to starve some men that it may make others drunk. The *Brewer's Year Book* boldly declares that it requires the toil of 75,000 farmers for six months to furnish these foodstuffs. If the labor of these men could be used for food instead of liquor it would measurably relieve the situation produced by the present scarcity of food. There are employed in the manu-

facture of liquor 62,920 wage-earners. These men are needed in legitimate industry, and they should be transferred to such occupations as will make their labor a blessing to the people instead of a curse. According to the statistics of the Medico-Actuarial Mortality Investigation, brewery workers lose an average of six years of life, and bartenders an average of seven years of life, on account of their occupations. The toll of life demanded by the liquor traffic of its own workers is too great for the nation to continue to pay it at a time when every bit of vitality is needed. Moreover, the liquor traffic increases every form of social waste, poverty, crime, disease, the social evil. Its elimination therefore is a first measure of social safety in the hour of peril. For these reasons—the waste of food, the waste of labor, the waste of life, the social waste—we appeal to the President of the United States, and to Congress, and we urge all the churches to appeal, that a bill for prohibition as a war measure be passed immediately. Pending such action, we urge our churches to give their heartiest practical support to carry out the plans of our Commission on Temperance, to persuade certain special groups—college alumni, society women, organized labor, men in training camps—to abandon the use of liquor. We further urge our churches to stand ready, in the event of war prohi-

bition, to develop a community program to replace constructively the social activities of the saloon.

The Social Evil

One of the most destructive social effects of war is to be seen in the rapid spread of that deadly race poison which is the consequence of the sins of the flesh. The reports from all belligerent countries show an appalling increase in venereal diseases. This is due in part to the concentration of men in camps, and in part also to the stimulating effect of the war spirit upon the sex instinct. There is no more urgent duty thrust upon religious leadership by this war, for the future interests of humanity, than to protect the unborn from the consequences of those sins which are indeed "visited upon the children." We heartily commend the action of the President in appointing an authority in practical measures of social hygiene to work in training camps. We are equally glad to note the joint plans of the Federal Council and of the International Young Men's Christian Association to care for the moral welfare of the army and navy. It will be the privilege of those churches in the neighborhood of training camps and naval stations to cooperate with these plans. They can aid in providing a beneficial social and recreational life for the men. It is the special responsibility of such

churches to insist that their communities sternly repress the vice and liquor interests and, as far as possible, remove all temptation from the path of the nation's defenders.

It will also be possible for each local church to see that enlisted men from its community are constantly kept in touch with home interests by friendly letters and remembrances. The stimulus of friendship and old associations will prove a source of moral strength. It will also be necessary for the churches to exercise special vigilance to safeguard the sex life of their own community, to prevent the lowering of standards that is one of the natural results of a time of excitement and strain. If any warning is needed in this direction, we need only point to the increase of illegitimacy in some of the belligerent countries.

Conserving Social Energies

One of the penalties of war is the depletion of social resources. The energies that have gone into the promotion of social progress are necessarily largely absorbed in the prosecution of the immediate national aim. The belligerent countries of Europe are all suffering from the arrest of their social programs. Before this country entered the conflict many of our social agencies found their funds falling off and were compelled to diminish their

staffs and defer or abandon their plans. Now war will multiply the nation's social needs. It will increase hunger, disease, delinquency, and add to the burdens of existing agencies for community welfare. In this situation members of our churches must consider their duty to increase rather than diminish their gifts and their services to all social agencies. Our allies in Europe have pointed the path of duty for us by their large gifts to Belgium, notwithstanding their heavy war budgets. It is a time to strengthen our normal community activities.

Child Welfare

There is particular need for increased emphasis upon child welfare. War makes a heavy attack upon child life. Unless this is repulsed the nation pays a double bill. It adds to the loss of much of its manhood the weakening of the next generation. In England the work of popular education has been shot almost to pieces. In regulated Germany, as one result of the war spirit and its demand upon the energies of the community, juvenile delinquency shows a marked increase. In a time of general prosperity, as we enter the war, the New York Department of Health records the largest number of seriously undernourished school children ever listed. In such a situation it is absolute folly to decrease the energies that have been given

to the conservation of child life. To meet the depletion of war the vitality of the coming generation needs to be increased. We therefore urge the churches to call the attention of the community to this need, and to increase their cooperation with all child welfare agencies. It is more important than ever to promote sound measures of health and sanitation, of good housing and full nourishment, of adequate recreation and education. To shorten the educational career of children who at best have a meager preparation for life, a measure already proposed, is a policy of social waste. In this emergency the practical program to which the Social Service Commission of the Federal Council has asked the churches to address themselves becomes more important than ever. The present widespread movement for vacant lot gardening, when properly organized and supervised, helps to prevent the moral waste of youth. It can be extended into full community supervision of the spare time of boys and girls. It furnishes a starting-point for a permanent mobilization of the community to care for the recreational and vocational needs of its young people.

National Vitality

The heavy proportion of young men of the age for military service who have been rejected because they are physically unfit is evidence of wide-

spread community conditions which make for the lowering of vitality and the production of defective lives. It is a demonstration of the need of discovering and removing these conditions. This need is increased by the tremendous expenditure of human life during the war. In many instances the churches have already addressed themselves to this task as a religious duty. Such activities will now need to be redoubled. Now that the entire world is forced to consider the best measures for the conservation of human life, it is particularly fortunate that the Federal Council has a movement under way to lead the churches into the most effective cooperation with all other agencies for the conserving and strengthening of national vitality.

Community Leadership

In these and other matters there is large opportunity for community leadership on the part of the religious forces. They must themselves, however, first learn to act together effectively. Existing church federations can in this emergency find new power through increased practical activities. In many places federated activities may for the first time be organized. The common need and purpose of the hour is fusing the community mind and spirit into a real unity. Capital and labor, different racial and social groups, are finding com-

mon tasks and with them a new understanding and appreciation of each other. This fact makes it possible for the churches to find a new approach to immigrants and to make the community need of their patriotic service an enforcement of community consideration. To lead them into the cooperative service of the hour is to give them a practical instruction in citizenship and the community a demonstration of their worth. Those who work together in a time of need will feel themselves, and will be felt to be, full members of a common family. As the growing community solidarity of the hour of crisis breaks down class barriers it is the opportunity for the Christian religion to emphasize its ideal of the permanent abolition of those artificial distinctions and differences which now split society into alien and antagonistic groups.

Economic Duties

The world is short of food. The President has fittingly called the attention of the nation to its duty to increase the food supply. In many lands there are hungry mouths dependent upon our labor. The safety of the nation and the outcome of the war may depend upon our success or failure here. The task is threefold: The conservation of our present economic resources, the increase of production, the securing of just distribution.

Increased Production

We specially urge all pastors in rural communities to call the attention of their members to the imperative necessity of securing this year the largest possible yield from the soil. The use of vacant land for gardening is an additional source of increased food supply, but it must be made a serious business or it will derange real production, and become a source of economic weakness. There is a religious service to be rendered by securing cooperative community plans for increased production of food staples, involving the use of all available land, capital, and labor. In suburban and rural communities the churches may well call together the people to consider this matter. The Commission on the Church and Country Life proposes to bring to the attention of the pastor of every rural church in the United States the necessity for the fullest cooperation with county agencies, farm bureaus, extension departments of the state agricultural colleges, and other agencies of the Federal and State Councils of National Defense, for kindness and consideration in the breaking in of new and untrained emergency laborers and for meeting their religious and social needs, for keeping the tone of public opinion in rural communities keyed to national and world-wide duties.

Economy and Simplicity

It becomes a religious duty at this hour to emphasize the criminality of waste. The elimination of extravagance and luxury is a permanent principle of Christian economy, but it must be remembered that there is an economic danger in curtailing reasonable consumption. Parasitic trades ought to be discontinued, but productive business must be maintained at its full capacity or there will be unemployment and poverty. The simple life which makes for the highest efficiency is the normal life for the followers of Jesus. Those who have thus been living for humanity in all good conscience must continue so to live. War has not changed their objective. Many who have never recognized the obligation for simple and efficient living will see it under the pressure of war needs. This opens an opportunity to religious leadership to make the high claim of brotherhood continuously effective in their lives in permanent standards of simplicity.

Conserving Labor Power

Equally imperative with the duty of conserving the economic resources of the nation, if not paramount to it, is the necessity of preventing its labor power from being depleted by improper conditions.

After a long struggle, in which the churches have taken part, certain industrial standards have been set up as the demand of Christianity. Under the pressure of war production, these standards are already being broken down. Before this country entered the struggle the feverish haste to furnish war supplies for profit had already developed the seven-day week, the long hour day, night work for women, exposure to accident and industrial poisoning, with a tremendous increase in the cost of living which lowered the standards of life for multitudes of wage-earners. Now comes a force more powerful than private profit to work the same wreckage of the social results of Christianity. The nation's need calls for haste. In response to that call state legislatures are considering bills to suspend the safeguards that have been placed around the life, the health, and the morals of wage-earners.

England's Experience

The folly and futility of thus attempting to hasten or increase production has been shown by the experience of England and France. In England, in the early days of the war, the patriotic spirit set aside labor laws in order to expedite the production of munitions of war. At the end of the first year the results were unsatisfactory. A Committee was appointed under the Ministry of Muni-

tions "to consider and advise on questions of industrial fatigue, hours of labor, and other matters affecting the physical health and physical efficiency of workers in munition factories and workshops." The chief concern was the supreme need of increased output. As a result of its investigation the Committee went on record against Sunday work, the long-hour day, and night work for women. It showed that the total daily output may be actually decreased by the introduction of overtime. It secured an increase of production by putting in the weekly rest period and by reducing the hours of labor to fifty-six per week.

A Practical Task

In the face of this evidence the churches have a patriotic duty to insist upon the maintenance of the industrial standards long since adopted by the Federal Council. Even though labor in its patriotism is willing to let down the safeguards it has struggled so hard to obtain, labor cannot be permitted mistakenly to consent to its own destruction and the weakening of the nation. Standards are broken down much easier than they are secured. At the end of the war the forces of greed will be waiting to take advantage of the situation while the forces of righteousness will have spent much of their energy. It becomes the urgent

duty of local church groups to watch industrial conditions. All attempts to establish a seven-day week, to lengthen the work day, or to lower wages, the failure to raise wages to keep pace with prices, the employment of women or of children and young people under sixteen in extra-hazardous industries, the failure to establish safety and protective devices in new war industries, the throwing of people out of work by unnecessary shutting down of plants, should be reported to the local City or State Federation of Churches or to the denominational Social Service Commission, to any State Safety, Sanitary, Industrial, or Health Board, and to the National Council of Defense, Washington, D. C.

Just Distribution

The duty of just distribution is equal with that of increased production. There is no higher patriotic service than to defend the nation against the inroads of social and industrial injustice upon its unity. In war times the cry of God's poor for protection sounds through the land. War prices mean undernourished wage-earners and lowered standards of living for those of small income. The church which is charged with teaching the social justice embodied in the message of the prophets and of Jesus must demand that all speculation in the necessities of life be absolutely eliminated and

that all attempts to secure unjust profits be effectively checked. The men who would make gain out of the hunger of the people must be driven from the temple of the common life as Jesus drove out the money changers.

Measures and Principles

The evident determination of the government to regulate the price of fuel and food is a practical method of social justice which we heartily commend. The President has recently had conferred upon him the power to control the operation of the railroads in case of military necessity. We would respectfully suggest that this power be used, not only for the transport of troops, but also to strengthen the nation's workers with the abundance of our harvests, so much of which has in other days been wasted for lack of efficient and just transportation facilities and distributive management. We call our people of means to remember that those who hoard the necessities of life are helping to raise the prices which the less fortunate must pay. The churches, which stand for "equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life," can do no other in time of national emergency than to insist that all the people shall be equally well nourished, and if any suffer it shall first be the idler. It is also an opportune

time to proclaim the principle that profit shall be nothing more than a reward for service rendered. As expressions of this principle we appreciate the evident determination of the government to curtail profits and also the voluntary action of business leaders in reducing profits on materials and products needed by the government. The patriotism which thus expresses itself may well consider whether it cannot also function in dealing with the purchasing public by the same standard. On the other hand, the men who would use a world crisis for personal profit are branding themselves as traitors to the nation and to humanity. Here is another opportunity for the churches to secure a lasting gain in the social expression of Christianity. They are now able to urge that the principle that pecuniary reward shall only equal service rendered, which is so clearly recognized in the time of emergency, should be permanently enthroned.

War Finance

The principle of equal rights and justice must also be applied to war finance. It is necessary that its burden be evenly distributed. The principle of universal service has been applied to life in the raising of troops. It should therefore be applied in the same manner to wealth and ability. Says a prominent Wall Street firm: "We accept the gen-

eral principle that wealth as well as persons should be conscripted and that those who risk their lives to fight our battle should not return home to pay for years to come the cost of conducting the war." If the nation picks the strength of its youth for the firing-line, justice demands that it select its financial strength and economic ability to bear the money cost of the war. The principle of universal service will mean that no specially privileged class shall be created. It will mean, as England has shown us, that the war shall be paid for largely out of excess profits and incomes, in order that an unfair proportion of its burdens shall not be piled upon the backs of the people of small income nor shifted to the shoulders of the next generation. If large profits develop out of the nation's war needs, the destruction of the productive process will inevitably follow, for labor will rightly decline, as it did in England, to permit its patriotic service to be thus exploited. We believe it to be just, whenever necessary, that income and profits should be taxed to the furthest possible point without checking production. We also believe it to be just and necessary to exempt that surplus income which is now dedicated to the maintenance of religious and social agencies, in order that the higher activities of civilization may not be impoverished.

The Development of Cooperation

Such measures constitute the beginning of a discipline in economic cooperation. The Federal Council has already declared that "the church must clearly teach the principle of the fullest cooperative control and ownership of industry and of the natural resources upon which industry depends in order that men may be spurred to develop the methods that shall adequately express this principle." The present emergency is developing some of those methods. The existing international control of finance and economic resources is the biggest piece of cooperative management the world has yet seen. This gain in cooperative capacity should be conserved and extended after the war. It should cross the barriers between the classes and the races. None should be excluded from its duties or its benefits. The world has taken a big step toward the day when the resources of the earth shall be recognized as the common possession of all the children of men to be jointly administered for the greatest good of all. When that can be done, the tap-root of strife will be cut, and the world-wide brotherhood of man can proceed to build the house of the spirit in which all people may dwell together with the Father of them all.

High Aims

This nation has entered the world war declaring itself bound to prosecute high aims. Yet it is the tendency of war to lower the spiritual resources of a nation. It lessens good-will which is the heart of Christianity. It limits democracy, which the Federal Council has declared to be the expression of Christianity. It therefore creates a compelling duty for followers of Jesus to promote good-will and to increase the spirit and practise of democracy. They must be doers of the word and not hearers only. In the practical duties of the hour herein suggested, and in the spiritual attitudes demanded, lies the opportunity for large development of the soul.

Love Your Enemies

It is for the teachers of Christianity to discover what it means in war time to "love your enemies." In many communities the churches have been learning this lesson as they have been fighting against organized evil. They are now to extend this experience to the international field. It is a time to pray to be delivered from "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness." It is a time to guard the spirit against unworthy and unjust suspicions, which are the beginning of hatred toward enemies abroad or aliens at home. Those who are willing to yield

their bodies for the defense of universal right are thereby ennobled, but those who harbor the spirit of vengeance thereby imperil their souls. To continue an economic war after the war, as has been proposed, would be a violation of the fundamental teachings of Jesus. It is the bounden duty of the churches to promote the spirit of reconciliation as the impetus to a cooperative world life from which our enemies shall not be excluded.

Freedom of Conscience

The churches have declared themselves through the Federal Council for the utmost possible extension of democracy. Therefore it is incumbent upon them to safeguard the spirit of democracy in the stress and strain of war time. Already free speech has been unreasonably curtailed and has been abused by the local authorities who have curtailed it. Its abuse is not so dangerous as its suppression. When the state compels men to military service it raises the ancient religious question of freedom of conscience. The churches which have furnished martyrs for this principle are under particular obligation to see that the conscientious objector is allowed such non-combatant service as does not violate his conscience. On both sides of this issue those who seek to apply the teachings of Jesus to a critical situa-

tion must grant both freedom and respect to others who interpret them differently.

Industrial Democracy

The Federal Council has declared that the "Christian ideal of the state cannot be realized until the principles of democracy are applied to industry. Therefore must the churches support all measures that really make for industrial democracy." Under the pressure of the common duty some of these measures are now being extended. In some instances, however, the right of collective bargaining, which the churches have declared to be the first expression of democracy in industry, is being aggressively and brutally denied. Those who take this attitude must be reminded that if we are to advance democracy throughout the earth we must first live it here. Only a free people can help to set others free.

The End of Militarism

This war will neither defend nor extend democracy unless it destroys the spirit of militarism, unless it exterminates the system of competitive armaments and releases the nations from the necessity of living in a hostile world. This is declared to be a war to end war. Therefore, as the President has stated, the discussion of permanent mili-

tary policies may well await the outcome. Meanwhile, the Christian pulpit can continuously create in the people the determination that this war shall end in nothing less than a constructive peace that may be the beginning of a world democracy.

The Christian World Order

The fact that such a calamity as this world war could come compels a rigorous scrutiny of the underlying principles of our civilization. It is a summons to the Christian church to challenge a social order based upon mutual distrust and selfish competition. It is a summons in penitence to renounce and oppose the principles of national aggrandizement at the expense of other peoples, of economic selfishness seeking to control the world's resources, trade routes, and markets. It is a summons to the Christian discipleship to bring forth the fruits of repentance in labor for a new world order. Because this nation has gone to war for international ends, for the rights of all peoples, it is the time of times for the pulpit to emphasize the international aspects of Christianity, for unless there be more of brotherhood in the world after the war there will be less of the Spirit of God. In such a day we dare not worship any national deity. We bow ourselves before the Father who "hath made of one blood all nations of men." We seek to know what

his justice, his righteousness and his love may mean in human relations. We look with unquenchable hope upon the vision of that social order foretold by the Hebrew prophets and called by Jesus the kingdom of God. Behind this world struggle that coming world order is dimly seen. It is the task of organized religion to keep the vision from being obscured by the dust and sweat of the conflict. We summon the generation that is paying the awful cost of this world war highly to resolve that out of it they shall create some form of world organization that shall turn the instruments of destruction into the means of constructive development, that shall give to every nation and to the last man due share in the ownership and control of the earth's resources and affairs, so that they may dwell unhurt and unafraid under their own roof-tree, and in all high service for each other may seek to develop the life of all to its highest spiritual values in order that God may indeed dwell with men.

Reprinted from *The Church in Time of War*, a publication of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, by order of the Secretarial Council of the Commission on Church and Social Service, June 6, 1917.

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